



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Press Statement

April 8, 2014

BHDDH Director Craig Stenning has issued the Following Statement in Response to the Department of Justice Consent Decree

“Rhode Island is partnering with the Department of Justice to be an innovator and leader in employment and day activities. The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) embraces this agreement as part of the ongoing transformation towards greater inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities. We welcome the endorsement of our ongoing initiatives in employment and day services and will continue to work with all of our stakeholders moving forward.

The statewide Consent Decree is a 10 year plan that acknowledges that there is no overnight solution. This Decree also recognizes the work that BHDDH began over three years ago in developing its “Employment First” initiative. The strategies in the Consent Decree will be implemented in a strategic and transparent manner, with our partners in the community including individuals, families, community providers, Advocates in Action, the Center for Excellence and Advocacy, the Business Leadership Network, Community Provider Network of RI, the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, the Developmental Disability Council, the Disability Law Center and the RI Parent Information Network.

The State presumes all individuals are capable of working in integrated employment. This is a shift in philosophy and practice. The intent is to ensure conversations about employment are occurring and individuals are provided with the opportunity to explore their employment interests. The State is focusing on individuals' strengths, capabilities and preferences, and supported employment will be available as needed and desired. Integrated day services will complement employment and both will be aligned with the maximum number of hours consistent with the individuals' preferences and abilities.

As a State, we will be working with our partners at the Office of Rehabilitative Services (ORS), the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Medicaid Division and the Department of Labor and Training to reform our system of day services for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), with a goal of greater community integration and inclusion. All reforms will put the needs and preferences of the individuals and families at the forefront. We are prioritizing informed choice and individuals' rights and we will insure that processes are in place to ensure these rights are protected. We are raising the expectations of the entire system.

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This is a marathon, not a sprint. We have begun to address systems gaps through the Interim Settlement Agreement. For example, ORS has recognized the need for additional Benefits Counselors, and the Department of Human Services will be working to make sure tools like the Medicaid Buy In Program and a coordinated resource center focusing on training, technical assistance, outreach and education are in place. We will be working with RIDE to create a streamlined system for eligible youth to transition into adult services that addresses choice.

Rhode Island was one of the leaders in the country to close its “institutions”, and the implementation of this action plan will place Rhode Island at the forefront of true community integration and the closing of workshops.”

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